



The President's Daily Brief

13 April 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

13 April 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] (Page 1)

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Thai army troops are encountering stiff resistance from Communist insurgents near the Lao border.
(Page 2)

The availability of foreign helicopters has buoyed some spirits in Ceylon [REDACTED]

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(Page 3)

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On Page 4 we discuss the situation in Pakistan.

France [REDACTED]

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(Page 5)

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At Annex, we discuss the implications of the Soviet Party Congress.

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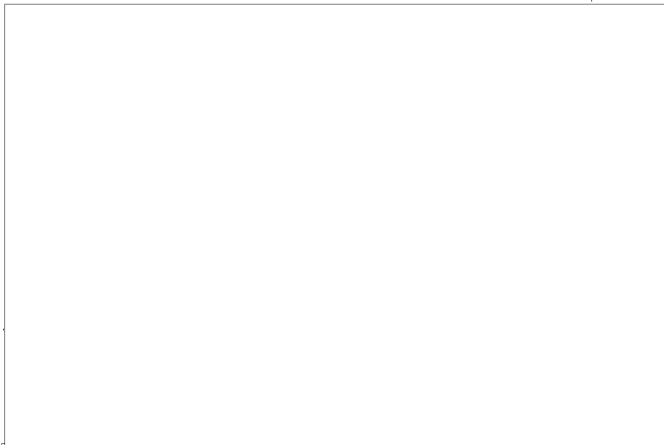
CAMBODIA



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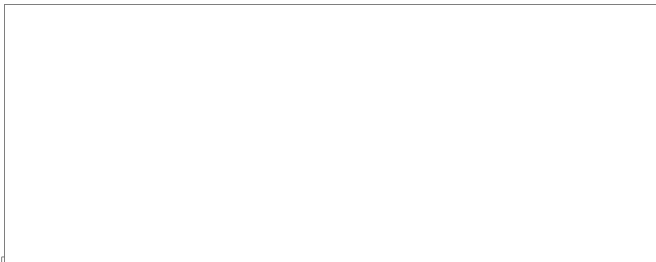
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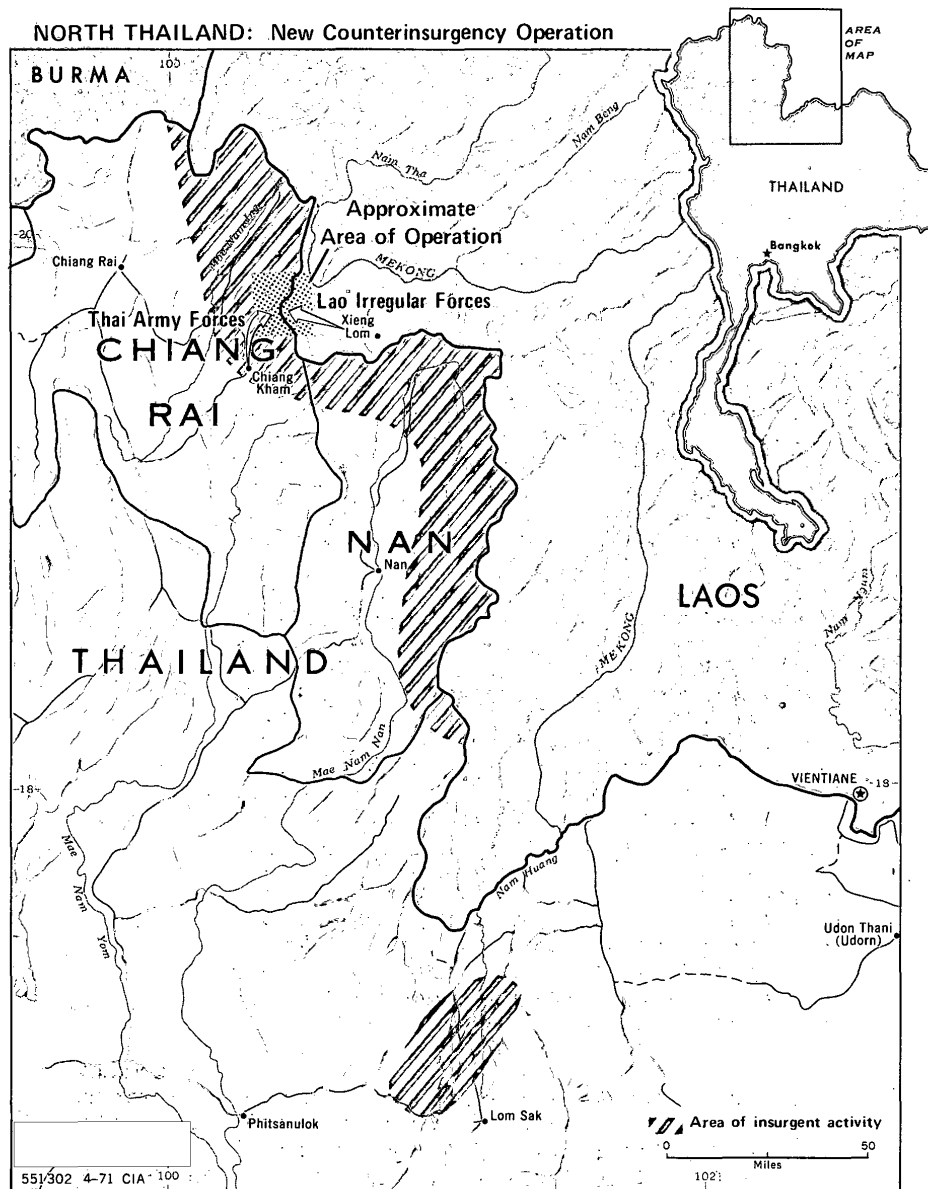
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THAILAND

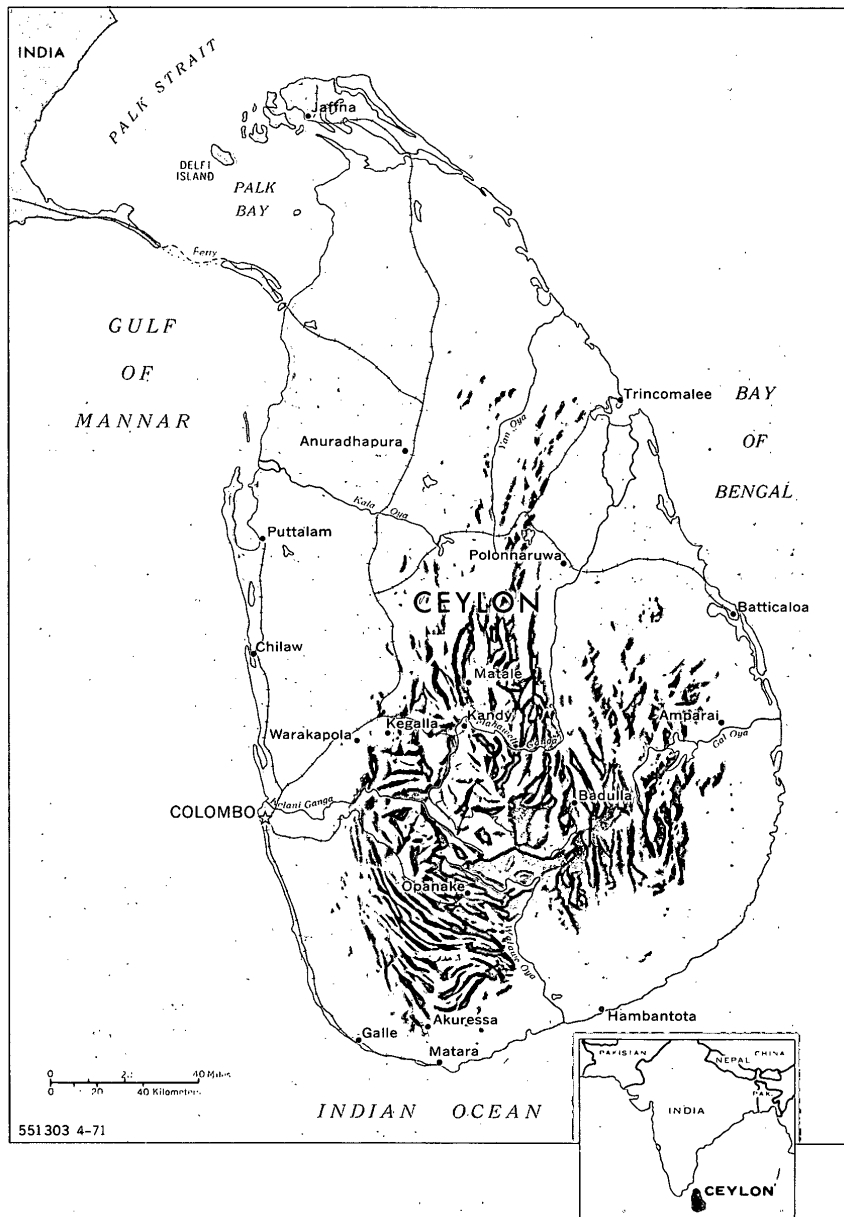
At least three army battalions, which have been driving against Communist mountain strongholds in Chiang Rai Province near the Lao border since 1 April, have encountered stiff resistance from the insurgents. The operation is aimed at eliminating the Communists' base camps, but it is evidently not going as smoothly as government leaders in Bangkok had hoped. [redacted] the insurgents are much better equipped, trained and organized than anticipated, and that the army has already sustained many casualties.

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For almost two years, Thai security forces have been trying to establish a presence in the northern border region, and the current operation is the most ambitious effort yet made. It is supported by air and artillery units

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[redacted]
It also represents a return to the offensive strategy that Bangkok abandoned following serious setbacks along the border in 1968 and 1969. The government, however, is up against a Communist force that has increased in numbers and equipment in the past two years and that retains the advantage of its familiarity with local terrain to mount effective ambushes and harassing attacks on the government forces.



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CEYLON

[redacted] yesterday that the situation was ready to turn in favor of the government, although a long, hard struggle still lies ahead. He is encouraged by the availability of foreign helicopters to supplement Ceylon's inventory of three. Two helicopters from Pakistan and five from India, complete with pilots and ground crew, now are stationed at Colombo's airport, and 150 Indian troops arrived yesterday to guard the field.

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[redacted]

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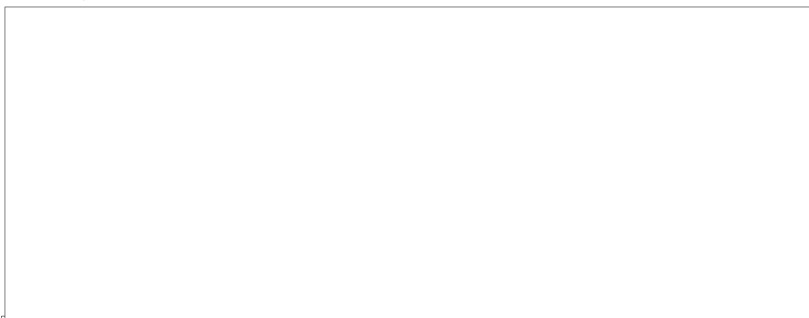
Numerous clashes were reported yesterday, including a firefight at Akuressa in southern Ceylon in which 25 insurgents were killed. In an attempt to improve government control in the most seriously affected areas, senior army officers have taken command of six of the island's 22 districts.

There continues to be a lack of cohesion within the government. The lines of speeches last weekend by government leaders were notably inconsistent. A second civilian security organization is being hastily organized under the direction of the moderate Home Minister, Felix Bandaranaike, a nephew of the prime minister's late husband. Composed of civil servants and unemployed youth, the new entity is intended to supplement the police, improve popular morale, and keep youth from joining the insurgents.

This is in addition to the security group being put together by leaders of the Marxist junior partners in Mrs. Bandaranaike's coalition, as mentioned in The President's Daily Brief yesterday. Although the Home Minister apparently approved this second organization, which is planned for the city of Colombo alone, the existence of the two security auxiliaries is another indication of divergence within the government.

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PAKISTAN-INDIA



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There has been no significant change in the military situation. Government forces appear to be concentrating on reopening land communications between Dacca and Jessore in the west.

Peking has increased its verbal support for the Pakistani government. [redacted] Chou En-lai once again pledged China's firm support of Pakistan's efforts to maintain its sovereignty and independence, and accused the US, the Soviet Union, and India of meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs.

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This is Peking's strongest support yet for the idea of a united Pakistan, although it does not commit the Chinese to any course of action. The Chinese probably believe that the Yahya government will be able to contain the revolt, and that statements of this sort will help fend off involvement by other countries.

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NOTES

France:

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[Redacted]

South Vietnam: Vice President Ky has told Robert Shaplen of The New Yorker that he has made an "irrevocable" decision to run against Thieu for the presidency. He claims he has begun to assemble a campaign staff and has secured pledges of over \$300,000. The statements of Ky, who has been up and down on the question of his candidacy, may have been prompted by his belief that Prime Minister Khiem will be Thieu's running mate. Ky waffled once before after assuring Shaplen that he had decided to run, and it is quite possible he will do so again.

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Burma:

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THE SOVIET PARTY CONGRESS

The 24th Party Congress was clearly Brezhnev's show. He used it to promote his own image before the party and the public and to bring several of his supporters into the Politburo, but not to launch any major initiatives in either domestic or foreign policy.

Brezhnev dominated the proceedings from the beginning. His initial six-hour speech, carried live on television, pre-empted all the themes of Kosygin's subsequent report on the five-year plan. Second-level speakers heaped praise upon him, and Soviet television treated its viewers to a 90-second ovation which followed his routine reappearance halfway through the congress. Brezhnev's predominance was underscored by the failure of any of his Politburo colleagues save Kosygin and the Ukrainian party chief Shelest to address the congress; his erstwhile challenger, Shelepin, current head of the trade unions, suffered a particularly damaging blow when he was forced to let his deputy give the traditional trade union speech.

Brezhnev has been increasingly hogging the limelight over the past year, and the major question has been whether he could translate this into real political gains. When the congress closed, it became clear that he had. No one lost his job, but the Politburo was expanded by four new members. We count three of them as his supporters, and the fourth probably belongs in this category as well. At the same time, several possible rivals, including Kosygin and Shelepin, slipped in the protocol ranking of the veteran members.

Our reading of the new Politburo is that, unless and until Brezhnev makes a series of major mistakes, no one can organize a majority against him. Indeed, his new support dilutes the political strength of his older colleagues, and he is probably in a position to ease them out if he chooses to do so. His political style is to operate gradually and to avoid sensations, however, and if he moves in this direction he will probably take his time.

This outcome raises the question of whether Soviet policy will change in any important respect now that Brezhnev has loosened, although not thrown off entirely, the constraints of collective leadership. In this respect, the congress proceedings provided numerous indications of continuity and precious few hints of change. The formulations on foreign policy,

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including such diverse matters as China, the Middle East, and relations with the US, carefully avoided breaking any new ground. On the domestic front, Brezhnev gave unusual emphasis to consumer welfare, but our first analysis of the statistics released at the congress does not indicate any substantial reordering of economic priorities. Neither he nor Kosygin foreshadowed any significant further steps in economic reform.

Preliminary analysis of the newly elected central committee also suggests a strong note of continuity in Soviet affairs. The great majority of old members were retained, and many of the new ones earned their right to seats by virtue of jobs they assumed long before the congress. While Brezhnev's increased strength probably is reflected in the enlarged committee (up from 195 to 241 full members) just as it is in the enlarged Politburo, the division of seats among various interest groups appears to parallel that of its predecessor--for example, the military establishment again commands approximately eight percent of the seats.

In general, we have viewed Brezhnev as a politician of conservative instincts--by Soviet standards--who values order, is concerned to maintain controls, is not prone to pose issues sharply, and prefers to see a consensus emerge rather than to dominate the policymaking process. He has not given the impression of a man with a number of strong views who has been frustrated by the need to take into account those of his colleagues. But it may be that, now that he has significantly improved his strength, he will put a more personal stamp upon Soviet policy.

On the record to date, we doubt it. Brezhnev's promises to the consumer, whatever the eventual payoff, may indicate a less harsh political line inside the USSR, and his even-handed criticisms of both neo-Stalinists and dissidents point in this direction as well. But at this early stage, the most likely prospect for Soviet policy under Brezhnev at home is continued conservatism, and abroad continued determination to fend off China, hold onto Eastern Europe, keep the US at arm's length, and expand Soviet influence as opportunities arise. This will not solve such fundamental long-range problems as the persistent lagging of Soviet industrial technology behind world standards or the inherently unstable condition of Eastern Europe. But if and when Soviet policy changes, it is more likely to do so under the pressure of events than in response to the leadership of a man like Brezhnev.

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